



# Best Practices to Prevent COVID-19

## Guidance for Food and Beverage Services

For the latest version of this guidance, please check

<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/ncorona2019/BestPractices/FoodandBeverage>.

### Updates

**12/16/21:** Updated to reflect current state of the pandemic and to add links to additional resources regarding the vaccination/testing ordinance in the city of Los Angeles.

**11/3/21:** Effective November 8, 2021, food and beverage establishments located in the city of Los Angeles (LA) that serve food and beverages indoors will be subject to the [LA City Vaccination Verification Ordinance](#). Establishments in LA that are already verifying vaccination status in compliance with the LA County [Health Officer Order](#) (e.g., nightclubs, lounges, breweries, wineries

Given the ongoing community transmission of COVID-19 and the presence of new and emerging variants, a layered approach to prevention that includes masking indoors, full vaccination with a booster dose, if eligible, and good ventilation, is essential to slowing the spread of COVID-19 in the community.

Per published reports, factors that increase the risk of infection, including transmission to people more than 6 feet away, include:

- **Enclosed spaces with inadequate ventilation or air handling** that allow for build-up of exhaled respiratory fluids, especially very fine droplets and aerosol particles, in the air space.
- **Increased exhalation of respiratory fluids** that can occur when an infectious person is engaged in physical exertion or raises their voice (e.g., exercising, shouting, singing).
- **Prolonged exposure** to these conditions.

Below is a summary of requirements and best practices for businesses that serve food and beverages to enhance safety for their workers, customers, and communities, and lower the risk of COVID-19 transmission within their establishments. In addition to this information, please remember:

- Food and beverage establishments located within the city of Los Angeles (LA) that offer indoor food and beverage service must comply with the [LA City Ordinance](#) requiring vaccination verification of customers entering indoor portions of the business. Establishments in LA that are already verifying vaccination status in compliance with the LA County [Health Officer Order](#) (e.g., nightclubs, lounges, breweries, wineries and distilleries) do not need to follow the Ordinance and should continue to follow the requirements of the Health Officer Order. See the [Safe Pass LA](#) website and [FAQ page](#) for a full list of covered locations and for more details on the Ordinance. For more information about implementing a vaccination requirement for your business, visit the [LA County Toolkit for Businesses](#) and the [Business COVID-19 Safety Compliance Certificate Program](#) website for helpful training materials. If you are unsure whether your facility is located in the city of Los Angeles visit <https://appcenter.gis.lacounty.gov/districtlocator/> and type in the address where your business is located.
- Employers must follow Cal/OSHA [COVID-19 Prevention Emergency Temporary Standards](#) (ETS) and the County Health Officer Order. Please note that the directives in the LA County Health Officer Order must be followed where they are more stringent than the Cal/OSHA ETS.



### Adhere to the California Retail Food Code

- ✓ Food facilities must continue to adhere to all food safety practices outlined in the [California Retail Food Code](#) (CRFC).
  - ✓ Self-service operations (e.g., buffets, soda-dispensing, bulk-food bins, food sampling) may be offered; continue to periodically check these areas as required and clean and sanitize frequently touched surfaces regularly.
  - ✓ Refilling beverages at a table or from a common container is no longer prohibited.
  - ✓ Self-service areas with condiment caddies, utensil caddies, napkins, lids, straws, may be offered for customer self-service.

### Best Practices to Enhance Safety at Higher-Risk Settings that Serve Food and Beverages

- ✓ **Higher Risk Settings:** Places that serve food and beverages to customers indoors are considered higher-risk settings because persons, both vaccinated and unvaccinated, are often indoors for an extended period and may remove their face masks to actively eat or drink. Public Health offers the following actions to enhance safety and lower transmission risks at these venues.
- ✓ Nightclubs, lounges, breweries, wineries, and distilleries: To enhance safety and lower the risk of transmission in indoor beverage service areas at bars, the Health Officer Order nightclubs, lounges, breweries, wineries, and distilleries to:
  - ✓ Verify that 1) all indoor patrons ages 12 and over are fully vaccinated before they are permitted entry to be seated or served or to take part in any activities in the indoor portions of the venue and 2) all on-site employees are fully vaccinated against COVID-19. See the LA County [Health Officer Order](#) for details related to on-site employees and vaccination requirements.
  - ✓ See the DPH [Business Compliance Toolkit](#) and the [Business COVID-19 Safety Compliance Certificate Program](#) website for helpful resources and training materials.
  - ✓ Patrons who do not provide proof of vaccination prior to entry may continue to be seated and served and to take part in activities in the outdoor portions of the venue. The risk of exposure to the virus that cause COVID-19 is lower outdoors than indoors and increases with crowding if someone present is infected.
  - ✓ Individuals who do not provide proof of vaccination may be permitted to enter the indoor portion of the facility temporarily for limited purposes such as to make a delivery or pick-up, to provide a service or repair, for an emergency or regulatory visit, to utilize the restroom, or to pick-up/pay for a to-go order.
- ✓ Restaurants and other food facilities:
  - ✓ Facilities located in LA:
    - Food and beverage establishments that are located in the city of Los Angeles must comply with the LA City [Vaccination Verification Ordinance](#) as described above. See the [SafePass LA](#) website and [FAQ page](#) for more information.
  - ✓ Facilities located outside of the city of Los Angeles:
    - Reserve indoor spaces as much as possible for persons that provide proof of their full vaccination against COVID-19 prior to entry. Seat those who do not provide proof of

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being fully vaccinated in an outdoor service area whenever possible. COVID-19 spreads more easily indoors than outdoors. The risk of exposure to the virus that causes COVID-19 is lower outdoors than indoors and increases with crowding if someone present is infected.

### Follow Mask Rules for Customers and Employees

- ✓ **Customers:** All [customers, regardless of vaccination status, are required to wear masks](#) when they are indoors. Make masks available for those who arrive without them.
    - ✓ Masks must be worn except when customers are actively eating and drinking. When actively eating and drinking indoors, customers must be seated or positioned at a table, counter, or other stationary location. "Actively eating or drinking" refers to the limited time during which the mask can be briefly removed to eat or drink, after which it must be immediately put back on. The customer must wear a mask whenever they are not actively eating or drinking, such as when they are waiting to be served, between courses or drinks, or while still seated after finishing the food or drink.
  - ✓ **Employees\*:** All employees, regardless of vaccination status, are required to wear masks when working indoors, or in shared vehicles. Masks need not be worn indoors if the employee is alone in a room or actively eating or drinking. Public Health strongly recommends that all employees who are eating or drinking indoors be spaced at least 6 feet from other persons.
    - ✓ Upon request, employers are required to provide employees who are not fully vaccinated with the correct-size N95 respirator for voluntary use, along with [basic instructions](#) on how to use the N95 respirator. Respirators must be replaced if they get damaged, deformed, dirty, or difficult to breathe through. For more information about free and low-cost PPE for businesses and organizations see: <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/docs/FreeAndLowCostPPE.pdf>.
    - ✓ Employees who work in a setting where they are in close contact with other people who may not be fully vaccinated should be encouraged to wear a higher level of protection, such as "double-masking" (wearing a cloth mask OVER a surgical mask) or an N95 respirator. This is particularly important if the employee is not fully vaccinated and is working in an indoor setting, in a crowded outdoor setting, or in a shared vehicle.
    - ✓ Consider requiring staff to also wear eye protection in addition to an N95 respirator if they are not fully vaccinated and have frequent close contact with others, in particular in the food and beverage service areas where customers are actively eating or drinking.
    - ✓ See the [Los Angeles County Health Officer Order](#) page and the [Cal/OSHA Emergency Temporary Standards](#) page for more information about mask requirements. Please note that the directives in the LA County Health Officer Order must be followed when they are more stringent than the Cal/OSHA temporary standards.
- \* Some independent contractors are considered as employees under the State Labor Code. For more details and clarification, check the California Department of Industrial Relations' [Independent contractor versus employee](#) webpage.

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### Screen customers, vendors, and delivery people

- ✓ Post [signage](#) to remind everyone who enters your establishment that they should NOT enter if they have symptoms of COVID-19 or if they are under isolation or quarantine orders.
- ✓ All customers who are served in the indoor portions of a food or beverage establishment located in the city of Los Angeles must show proof of full vaccination against COVID-19 prior to entry. Visit the [SafePassLA](#) website for more information.

### Reduce crowding indoors

- ✓ If possible, maintain or expand your outdoor dining capacity to enable more customers to eat outside where ventilation is better.
- ✓ Indoors, limit your occupancy if it does not disrupt your operations by arranging tables to increase physical distance between tables.
- ✓ Control access to self-service areas, such as buffets, salad bars, and beverage service stations so as to avoid customers congregating; place servers when possible, to eliminate customer use of common utensils and dispensers.

### Ventilate

- ✓ Continue to maintain your building's HVAC system in good, working order.
- ✓ Consider installing portable high-efficiency air cleaners, upgrading the building's air filters to the highest efficiency possible, and making other modifications to increase the quantity of outside air and ventilation in all working areas.
- ✓ When weather and working conditions allow, increase fresh outdoor air by opening windows and doors. Consider using fans to increase the effectiveness of open windows - position window fans to blow air outward, not inward.
- ✓ Decrease occupancy in areas where outdoor ventilation cannot be increased.
- ✓ Keep your background music volume low so that customers and employees do not have to talk loudly to be heard.
- ✓ See State [Interim guidance for Ventilation, Filtration, and Air Quality in Indoor Environments](#).

### Support handwashing

- ✓ Place handwashing signs at handwashing sinks inside restroom facilities reminding patrons to wash their hands. Food employees are required to wash their hands as outlined in the CRFC.
- ✓ Continue to encourage frequent handwashing by employees.
- ✓ Continue to offer hand sanitizer at entry of facility with signage promoting use.
- ✓ Posters in multiple languages that [remind people to wash or sanitize their hands](#) and show [how to wash their hands](#) are available in the [signage section](#) of the [Best Practices for Businesses and Employers](#) webpage.

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### Communicate

- ✓ Post [signage](#) so that customers who are entering your establishment are aware of your policies, including the requirement that all customers must wear a face mask while indoors except when actively eating and drinking.
- ✓ Staff should remind customers that they need to put their face masks back on when they are not actively eating or drinking, such as when they are waiting to be served, between courses or drinks, or while seated after finishing the food and drink. Customers should be encouraged to minimize the amount of time with their face mask off to help reduce the risk for employees and for customers while eating or drinking.
- ✓ Use your online platforms to communicate your COVID-19 safety policies to the public.
- ✓ Consider using a reservation system to keep the number of people in your establishment steady and/or using an online waiting list that enables customers who are waiting for a table to wait outside or in their cars instead of indoors.